



The Objection of Al-‘Uthaymīn and the Answer to it

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Released by www.marifah.net 1428 H

Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ Al-‘Uthaymīn has objected to taking proof from the aforementioned verse of the Qur’ān [*and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful*] as he said in his formal legal opinions (*Fatāwā*²) what follows:

“*Idh* (when) is an adverb [denoting time] that has passed by and not an adverb [denoting action that will take place] in the future. Allāh has not said: “*And had they, when they are unjust*”, rather Allāh said “*when (idh) they were unjust*”. Hence this verse is referring to something that took place during the life of the Messenger of God ﷺ. And the possibility that the Messenger of God ﷺ asks forgiveness for them after his

¹ Excerpted from: *Raf’ al-Mināra bi-Aḥādīth al-Tawassul Wa al-Ziyāra* (Raising the Lighthouse with the Ḥadīths of Seeking Means and Visitation [of the Prophet ﷺ])

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death is something impossible. This is due to the fact that after the death of a person all of his actions are discontinued - as the Messenger ﷺ has said - except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge which is being benefited from or a righteous child who prays for him. Hence there is no possibility for a man to ask forgiveness after his death for anyone, or even for himself, because his deeds have been discontinued.” (End of quote.)

I say: this is a bold enterprise on the part of Al-‘Uthaymīn, we ask Allāh for safety. Its rebuttal is as follows:

His restriction of *idh* to the past tense, let us examine it. *Idh* is used in the past as well as in the future and it has several other meanings that were mentioned by Ibn Hishām in *Mughnī Al-Labīb*³. Al-Azhārī has [also] stated that *idh* (when) is used in the future; he said in *Tahzīb Al-Lughā*⁴ that Arabs use *idh* for the future and *idha* for the past. God, the Great and Almighty said: ***“And could you see when (idh) they shall become terrified”***⁵.

I say, [we could also mention] as an example of using *idh* in the future what Allāh, Exalted is He, said: ***“And could you see when (idh) they are made to stand before the fire”***⁶; ***“And could you see when (idh) they are made to stand before their Lord.”***⁷; ***“And if you had seen when (idh) the unjust shall be in the agonies of death”***⁸; ***“And could you but see when (idh) the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord”***⁹.

As for his saying that asking the Messenger ﷺ for forgiveness is impossible due to the fact that if a person dies his actions will be discontinued except for three things, this is wrong. [On the contrary,] asking our liege-lord the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ for forgiveness is not impossible for several reasons. The

³ 1/ 80 – 83

⁴ 15/47

⁵ Qur’ān: Saba’, 51

⁶ Qur’ān: Al-An’ām, 27

⁷ Qur’ān: Al-An’ām, 30

⁸ Qur’ān: Al-An’ām, 93

⁹ Qur’ān: Al-Sajda, 12

first one is that it was authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **“the Prophets are alive in their graves praying”** as mentioned by Al-Bayhaqī in *Ḥayāt Al-Anbiyā’*¹⁰, by Abu Ya’lā in his *Musnad*¹¹, Abu Nu’aym in *Akḥbār Aṣbahān*¹², and Ibn ‘Adī in *Al-Kāmil*¹³. Al-Haythamī said in *Al-Majma’* that “the narrators (*rijāl*) of Abu Ya’lā are trustworthy” and there are other chains for the ḥadīth.

[Furthermore], the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said **“I came across Moses when he was standing praying in his grave”** as mentioned by Muslim¹⁴, Aḥmad¹⁵, and Al-Baghawī in *Sharḥ Al-Sunna*¹⁶ as well as by others. In addition to that, Ibn al-Qayyim said in his (poem) *Nūniyya* about the life of the Messengers after their demise¹⁷,

The Messengers are at a more excellent state than him (the Martyr) and this is clearly demonstrated

Because they were even in their lives more accomplished than our martyrs in wisdom and in giving proofs

And because the Messenger’s marriage is not annulled after his death, and his wives remained chaste and protected

In this is not there evidence that He is alive, for he who has ears to hear?

The second reason is that it has been proven that the Prophet ﷺ has led the prayer as the Imām before the Prophets (may the peace and blessings of God be upon them) during Isra’ [the night journey

¹⁰ p. 15

¹¹ 147/6

¹² 44/2

¹³ 2/739

¹⁴ 4/1845

¹⁵ 3/120

¹⁶ 13/351

¹⁷ Al-Nūniyya with Sharḥ ibn ‘Īsa 2/160

through the spiritual world] - this is a mass narrated ḥadīth (*mutawātir*) - and all of them were deceased and Musa ﷺ had requested him to reconsider regarding the prayers and he ﷺ saw other [Prophets] in the heavens. How can it be impossible for a person in this state to ask forgiveness [for the others] (knowing that prayer is supplication, asking for forgiveness and imploring)?

The third reason is that it has been authentically reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: **“My life is a great good for you, you will relate about me and it will be related to you, and my death is a great good for you, your actions will be exhibited to me, and if I see goodness I will praise Allah, and if I see evil I will ask forgiveness of Him for you”**. It is an authentic narration, and Hāfiẓ al-Iraqī said about it in *Ṭarḥ al-Tathrīb*¹⁸: good chain. Al-Haythamī said in *Al-Majma*¹⁹: it was narrated by Al-Bazzār and his narrators are authentic. Al-Suyūṭī also authenticated it in *al-Khaṣā’iṣ*²⁰. And the sayings of al-‘Irāqī and al-Haythamī are only with regard to the Isnād of al-Bazzār. Otherwise, the narration is authentic as Al-Hāfiẓ Al-Suyūṭī as well as others, have said. The ḥadīth will be expanded upon later if God wills.

The fourth reason is that the Prophet asking God’s forgiveness could happen for all the believers whether they were present during his lifetime or not as Allāh – Exalted is he - said: **“and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and for the men and women who believe”**²¹ and this is a favor from Allāh – Exalted is He – and one of the distinguishing qualities of our liege-lord the Messenger of Allāh ﷺ.

We have realized from the aforementioned [arguments] that the three matters related in this Qur’ānic verse and are : 1) to visit him ﷺ ; 2) asking for forgiveness; 3) the Prophet ﷺ asking forgiveness for the believers. Those three [matters] can happen during his lifetime ﷺ and after his demise. And people shouldn’t say that this verse was meant for particular groups of people. They shouldn’t say this because the well known principle is “The conclusion is derived from the generality of terms used and not from the specific conditions (at the time of revelation)”. Therefore, the exegetes and others have understood from this verse the generality [of wording] and they recommended for those who come to the honored grave to read this Qur’ānic verse: **“and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and**

¹⁸ 297/3

¹⁹ 9/24

²⁰ 2/281

²¹ Qur’ān: Muḥammad, 19

asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful”²² and to ask Allāh – Exalted is He – for forgiveness.

And both the *tafasīr* which we have and the (books on) rituals (of hajj) which have been classified by the scholars of the *Madhāhib* (schools of jurisprudence) likewise all have sincerely adduced this (action) from this verse. Why do we go so far, here is the exegete Abu Muḥammad Ibn Qudāmah al-Ḥanbalī, the author of *al-Mughnī*, about whom Ibn Taymiyyah said: “no one possessing more understanding [of religion] than Ibn Qudāmah has entered Syria after Al-‘Awza’ī”. He [i.e. Ibn Qudāmah] mentions this verse of the Qur’ān in *al-Mughnī*²³ regarding the visit to Al-Muṣṭafa [the Elected one] ﷺ and he has related something similar on page 65. He said regarding the manner of visiting (the grave):

Then you visit the grave, you turn your back, face its center and say: May the peace, mercy and blessings of Allāh be upon you, O Prophet! May the peace of Allāh be upon you O Prophet of Allāh and the best of His creation. Till he says after praising and sending blessings upon the Prophet: O Allāh! you said, and your saying is truthful: *“and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful”*²⁴, and I have come to you seeking forgiveness for my sins, seeking intercession through you to my Lord, hence I ask you O Lord to obligate forgiveness for me as you have made it an obligation for those who came to him during his lifetime ﷺ. O Allah make him ﷺ be the first among intercessors, the most successful among seekers and the most generous of the last and first [prophets], with your mercy, O Most Merciful. Then he invokes Allāh in favor of his parents and all his Muslim brothers. End of the concise quote.

[What] remains is commenting on the saying of Ibn ‘Uthaymīn whereby he said “because if a person dies, his actions will be discontinued except for three ...”. I say that our liege-lord the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ had perfections and distinguishing qualities which others did not share. And this has been affirmed by

²² Qur’ān: Al-Nisā, 64

²³ 3/590

²⁴ Qur’ān: 4, 64

Ibn Taymiyya in his book *Al-Ṣārim al-Maslūl ‘Alā Shātim Al-Rasūl*, which is one of his best books. And he ﷺ is in progress and exaltation till the Day of Judgment. And such matters are known as a necessity from the religion and affirmed in the books of *Al-Khaṣā’iṣ*, *Dalā’il al-Nubūwwah*, *Al-Shifā* and the corresponding commentaries. As he ﷺ has said that **“Whoever calls to guidance will have the same reward as those who follow it without their reward being reduced in the slightest bit”**²⁵. All the deeds which are done by the Community of Muhammad, therefore, revert to the Prophet of Allāh’s ﷺ preaching (*da’wah*) and the reward (for these good acts) reverts to him. And he certainly takes profit of them (the good actions of the ummah) without the rewards (of the ummah) being reduced the slightest bit. And regarding this, Ibn Taymiyya said in his legal opinions²⁶:

It has been proven about the Prophet ﷺ in the *Saḥīḥ* that he said: **“Whoever calls to guidance will have the same reward as those who follow it without their reward being reduced in the slightest bit”**. And Muḥammad ﷺ is the caller (*da’ī*) to his community’s good deeds (i.e. he originally called them towards these good deeds), hence he has from what they do the same reward as they do without theirs being reduced the slightest bit.
[End of Ibn Taymiyya quote.]

And what happened is that Ibn ‘Uthaymīn has erred in what he said. We seek Allah’s protection from speaking about the Book of Allāh without any knowledge and trespassing on the status of our liege-lord, the Prophet of Allāh ﷺ.



²⁵ Reported by Muslim and others

²⁶ Fatāwa: 1/191